

sionen um Jerusalem als *civitas perfida* und die Kontroversen um das Jerusalempilgerwesen stellt der Band auf diese Weise die reichen Zeugnisse christlicher Jerusalemspiritualität vom Urchristentum bis zur frühen Reformation gegenüber. Man kann daher vermuten, daß die Autoren eben in der Verehrung Jerusalems den historisch wichtigeren und für das Christentum eigentlich repräsentativen Aspekt der Jerusalemtradition sehen.

Das konsequente Fehlen jeder kulturwissenschaftlichen Begrifflichkeit läßt sich als methodische Entscheidung lesen, ebenso wie die an konkreten Daten, Quellen und sachlichen Details reiche Durchführung der jeweiligen Argumentation. Auch die Demonstration der Tatsache, daß in Europa neben englisch weitere Wissenschaftssprachen gepflegt werden, kennzeichnet die Sammlung insgesamt.

So lohnt es sich, die Sammlung ganz zu lesen. Weil alle Autoren ihre spezifischen Beobachtungen in den größeren historischen Kontext einbetten, zeichnet sich über den Einzelbeiträgen tatsächlich die Geschichte der Stadt als konkrete Lebenswirklichkeit und als wirkmächtige Idee ab. Es ist zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte des Christentums. So erinnert der Band daran, daß Jerusalem in seiner Bedeutung für das lateinische Europa nicht zu überschätzen ist. Und wenn auch die nichtlateinischen Konfessionen weder vollständig noch paritätisch berücksichtigt sind, wird hier doch eine Vorstellung von christlicher Spiritualität erkennbar, die von einer die Kontinente übergreifenden und vielfältigen Welt des Christentums ausgeht. Diese hat, so das Ergebnis des Bandes, strukturell gut vergleichbare Formen ausgebildet, die sich überdies vielfach miteinander verflechten; in ihrem Mittelpunkt befand sich im Mittelalter unverrückbar Jerusalem, das biblische, das gegenwärtige und das künftige.

Dorothea Weltecke

Christoph Luxenberg, *Die Syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Verlag Hans Schiler, zweite überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage, 2004; 351 pages, price unknown.

The publication in 2000 of *Die Syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran*, a title now available in a revised and slightly enlarged second edition of 2004, created a sensation in the popular press. It also, however, has given new impulse to the study of the Qur'ān in more scholarly venues. The curiosity stimulated by this book and the attention devoted to it by the media have, in part, been provoked by the author's decision to assume the pseudonym of Christoph Luxenberg. That curiosity and attention have also been generated by the startling conclusions that the author has drawn. Taken as a whole, his findings dismiss the entire edifice of Muslim Qur'ān commentary as irrelevant and redefine the Qur'ān as a document that has been badly misread since the first century of its existence. On the basis of this redefinition, all extant copies of the Qur'ān, whether ancient or modern, perpetuate these misreadings. Luxenberg's study departs from the basic fact, widely acknowledged in both Muslim and Western scholarship, that the Qur'ān includes an array of obscure words and passages, some of which are attributable to the incorporation of foreign loanwords in the text. His monograph is both narrowly philological in method and broadly speculative in its presumptions and conclusions. The exclusively philological approach and focus simultaneously constitute the work's boldest claim and its greatest weakness. Luxenberg operates in the unfettered isolation of purely philological intuitions, while disregarding any form of historical-critical analysis. The result of his research provides many plausible new readings of the text, some that are probable but very few that carry the resounding ring of genuine certitude.



In fact, Luxenberg's study is based on two major premises; one is his basic thesis and the other is his radical hypothesis. His basic thesis postulates that the Qur'ān can only be explained successfully if read against the background of Syriac because Syriac was the paramount literary and liturgical language of the environment in which the Qur'ān first took shape. According to Luxenberg previous scholarship has paid attention – and limited attention at that – to only a fraction of the obscure passages in the Qur'ān. It has remained blind to the obvious fact that the Qur'ān is a quarry of incomprehensible passages. He contends that this incomprehensibility can only be clarified if the Qur'ānic text is read with Syriac in mind. Using the idiosyncratic expression "Syro-aramaic", Luxenberg explains how Aramaic, the lingua franca for a thousand years in the Middle East and the medium of culture, evolved into Syriac as Christianity spread throughout the region. Syriac, in turn, became the paramount literary language through its dissemination as a vehicle of biblical translation. This Syriac translation of the Bible, commonly known as the Peshitta, was undertaken from the second to the fifth century in Edessa in northern Syria.

As Luxenberg explains, Syriac and Arabic are sibling Semitic languages with common trilateral roots and a similar verbal system. The Syriac alphabet has 22 distinct letters, only two of them marked by an auxiliary dot above or beneath to distinguish them in formation. Arabic, in contrast, has 28 letters, but only six of them are clear and unequivocal in form. The others appear ambiguous and equivocal except if marked by auxiliary dots, called diacritics. In addition, to indicate long vowels, Arabic uses consonants as well as the aid of a pen stroke as mater lectionis. These diacritics (and later, the vowel points for short vowels as well as the signs for unvowelled and doubled consonants) were needed to move from the ductus of the rudimentary script (*scriptio defectiva*) to that of the perfected script (*scriptio plena*).

The foregoing thesis is uncontroversial. Luxenberg's radical hypothesis, however, takes a much bolder leap. He equates *qeryānā*, the Syriac term for "reading, recital" (*"lectio"*), with a Syriac lectionary (*"lectionarium"*) used in Church liturgies that included readings from the Old and New Testaments as well as liturgical prayers, psalms and hymns. Luxenberg argues that the book of the Qur'ān initially resembled such a lectionary; therefore the "mother of the book" (*umm al-kitāb*) was the Bible, the source of the Syriac lectionary.

Luxenberg's radical hypothesis generates a number of striking new readings of the Arabic text: (1) the *sūra* generally understood to include the first revelation to Muḥammad, is actually a liturgical invitation to the Eucharist, ending with the words, *wa-sjud wa-qtarib* (Q 96:19) and meaning, in Luxenberg's translation, "perform your divine service and take part in the eucharist." (2) The short *sūrat al-kawthar* (Q 108, 1-3), ordinarily understood as an encouragement to the Prophet who had been insulted by an enemy, is taken to offer, in Luxenberg's words, "the first documented proof" of a passage from a NT letter in the Qur'ān. Luxenberg reads it as a reference to perseverance in prayer in the face of Satan's strategies that echoes 1 Pt 5:8-9, "be sober, be watchful; your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour; resist him firm in your faith." (3) In a recent appendix published in *Streit um den Koran* (ed. C. Burgmer, Hans Schiler Verlag 2005, pp. 35-41), Luxenberg identifies a personal pronoun in *sūrat al-qadr* (Q 97:1) as a reference to the new-born child Jesus. By this logic the famous "night of power" denotes the mid-night Syriac liturgy for Christmas eve rather than, as commonly understood, the descent of the Holy Book. (4) The reference in Q 42:51 to *waḥy*, divine revelation via a messenger sent by God, assumes, in Luxenberg's reading, the arbitrary metathesis of "*ḥawwī*" and is taken to mean "to instruct", thus implying the existence of a human teacher of the Prophet.

To explain the link between his basic thesis and his radical hypothesis, Luxenberg stipulates a methodical series of steps whose sequence establishes his way of reading the Qur'ān. He first checks the translations of Paret, Blachère and Bell, then compares the interpretations listed in



Tabarī's Qur'ān commentary and the lexical information given in Lisān al-'arab, and next consults Manna's Chaldean dictionary. As a final step, he moves and removes the diacritics in the Arabic text of the Qur'ān, also experimenting with the use of metathesis and manipulation of the mater lectionis, in order to secure the Syriac reading of the Arabic text that serves his purpose in a particular situation. Though it lacks historical references for its vocabulary, Manna's dictionary is chosen chiefly because it is a Syriac-Arabic dictionary, while Payne Smith's Syriac-English dictionary, which gives references to pre- or post-seventh century texts, is consulted less consistently.

A careful analysis of the sixty-odd Qur'ānic passages treated by Luxenberg, reveals, however, that he rarely follows his method meticulously. Rather he works primarily by consulting Manna and following his own hunches and instincts. The frequently astonishing results of this intuitive methodology are numerous readings which appear quite plausible but which cannot be proven as accurate, either individually or cumulatively. While insisting on his purely and exclusively philological method, Luxenberg consistently disregards the scholarly accumulation of almost two centuries of Qur'ānic textual criticism. He excuses this disregard with a profession of academic purity, namely that he thereby avoids being influenced by previous studies.

To substantiate his philological intuitions, Luxenberg appeals to the social environment of Mecca because the name of that town can be construed to mean a "depression" in Syriac, and Mecca in the Ḥijāz lies in a hollow between two mountains. Furthermore, Luxenberg insists that Muḥammad could probably read and write. He probably traveled to Aramaic speaking areas as a merchant and presumably came into contact with Aramean traders in Mecca itself. The social mix of Arabs and Aramaic speakers in Mecca facilitated the emergence of the Qur'ān as the first attempted expression in written Arabic. The language of this Qur'ān was created by scribes who were familiar with the cultural language of the Aramaic milieu and who produced a mixed language, one which blended Arabic with Syriac in such a fashion that almost a third of its content forms a textual layer derived from Syriac. This hybrid Qur'ānic language, which Luxenberg assumes to reflect the Meccan dialect of the time, also included loanwords from a variety of other sources and can be traced in particular in the Meccan sūras of the present day Qur'ān.

Furthermore, and decisive for Luxenberg's argument, after Muḥammad's death the true meaning of this hybrid Qur'ān was forgotten by an astonishingly wide-spread loss of memory in the Muslim world. Later generations, only familiar with Arabic but no longer aware of Syriac, and scribes, whose ancestors had left the Ḥijāz to live in the conquered areas of the Fertile Crescent, were unable to understand the original mixed language and wrote down the Qur'ān in the "classical" type of Arabic in which we have it today. The gradual disappearance of the knowledge of Syriac among the Muslim Arabs began in the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (685-705) when Syriac was replaced by Arabic as the official written language for the administration of the Umayyad Empire. Luxenberg further asserts that the Arabic script gives only an image of language but cannot help us determine whether this scriptural image was also spoken. Because of the widespread loss of memory, the gradual disappearance of Syriac in the Muslim environment and our ignorance about the relation of the written to the then spoken word of Arabic, the oral conveyance of the Qur'ān was cut short. With this interruption in the process of transmission, Muslim exegesis of the Qur'ān never operated authentically because it could not base itself on the original formulation of the Holy Book.

Within Luxenberg's narrative of textual construction, the qurrā', the readers and scribes who were responsible for the fixation, first, of the consonantal text and, later, of its vocalization, were blinded in their effort to establish the so-called seven aḥruf or readings of the Qur'ān. Luxenberg argues that, culminating with the canonical systematization of Ibn Mujāhid (d. 936), they took the classical form of Arabic, worked out by non-Arab grammarians such as Sibawayh (d. about



796), as their standard although this classical Arabic was significantly different from the dialectal Arabic of the hybrid Qur'an.

This pessimistic assessment of the oral tradition with regard to the transmission of the Qur'an from the time of Muhammad to the time when the written text was fixed, allows Luxenberg to claim an enormous freedom in emending the Qur'anic text. With regard to passages he deems obscure or in need of repair, he is free to move and remove diacritics or invert the sequence of letters within a word by metathesis or graft different long vowels on a given pen stroke, in order to make Arabic words fit the Syriac roots he has in mind.

At the same time, his approach requires him to set aside entirely the fruits of much qur'anic scholarship over the past two centuries. Luxenberg dismisses the work of both Muslim and Western scholars who have undertaken a careful and qualified comparison of the Qur'an with pre-Islamic poetry. Also, he pays no attention to the durability of oral tradition and the accuracy of the transmission of sacred texts, which have often been shown to be very reliable over centuries. By assuming a complete break in the oral transmission of the Qur'an, Luxenberg can posit a total dependence on a hypothetical text, one written in the rudimentary form of the Arabic ductus without diacritical dots, a text that he claims enshrines a layer of Syriac to represent thirty percent of the text. Unfortunately, this postulated text of the Holy Book cannot be documented by a single fragment of a manuscript.

In this short review it is not possible to examine critically each and every Qur'anic word of the many phrases selected for analysis by Luxenberg. A few good examples, however, can serve as highlights. Instances would include the observations on the name of Abraham, the emendation of *barā'a* as referring to the covenant, the analysis of Torah with the help of Nöldeke's Mandaean grammar and the reading of the phrase *fī jaww l-samā'* as "in the midst" rather than the air of the sky. It remains uncertain whether Luxenberg's substitution of white raisins for white-eyed virgins presents a possibly valid interpretation. The context of the term, *hūr*, in the Qur'an and the fact that Lisān al-'arab documents "white grapes of Tā'if" by this term may be cited as evidence, as Luxenberg does. In general, however, most of his selections of obscure readings, re-read with Syriac in mind, are individual words, certain names and a great variety of short phrases. Many of them have a plausible ring, but very few can be shown to be secure readings. Unfortunately, Luxenberg cannot point to a single short sūra or a sequence of a few verses in the Arabic of the actual Qur'an that could be compared to their hypothesized Syriac mirror image. All he can suggest are words or snippets that can be set in parallel to a supposedly Syriac substratum. In general, one encounters a circular form of reasoning that hardens the assumptions into presumptions and then proceeds as if they were certainties.

There are, however, three sūras that Luxenberg examines in their entirety. He claims, as doubtlessly certain, the validity of his essential argument for a Eucharistic invitation as represented by sūrat al-'alaq (Q 96). A close reading, however, discloses that the argument rests on his interpretation of a single word, namely *iqtarib*, the imperative in the eighth stem, which he translates with the command, "take part in the Eucharist!" This is hardly an unassailable certainty, as Luxenberg insists, because a Christian poem he cites in support of his argument explicitly uses the fifth stem *taqarrab*. The basis of Luxenberg's interpretation for the qur'anic appearance of Christmas in sūrat al-qadr (Q 97) is even more tenuous. Here, a personal pronoun is arbitrarily identified with the infant Jesus, although an inner Qur'anic parallel (Q 44:3) works directly against Luxenberg's interpretation that the midnight Nativity scene replaces the Qur'an's descent in the night of power. His interpretation of sūrat al-kawthar (Q 108) suffers from a similar indeterminacy. A student of Hebrew, for instance, might wish to play with the root and change it into Hebrew *kether*, assuming it to refer to awaiting the "crown" promised for life to come,



while a student of the Peshitta may notice that *shānī'*, the adversary cited in this Qur'ānic sūra is *be'elzebhab* in the Syriac of Peter's letter and that the perseverance in prayer is rendered more plausibly by the mediation of Luxenberg's German translations than by the actual Syriac wording in the Peshitta. This is simply to emphasize that Semitic roots invite creative interpretation and that alternatives to Luxenberg's readings can be easily proposed.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Luxenberg knows his Syriac and spends an enormous amount of time and energy in his attempts to establish plausible Syriac readings to elucidate very small text portions of the Qur'ān. Far from affecting thirty percent of the Holy Book, his analysis covers at best one percent of the actual Qur'ānic text. Setting aside the significant challenge that his theological assumptions present, Luxenberg's painstaking study is of great help in opening a line of inquiry which will prove important for the textual criticism of the Qur'ān, and in this he leads us much further than Mingana. He demonstrates successfully that there may be more substance to the hypothetical Syriac background of the Qur'ān than what previous scholarship about loanwords has been willing to affirm. There is no reason to assume that the influence of Syriac was limited to loanwords and concepts; there is no reason it would not have also affected the structure of phrases or the conceptual context. Here a moderate form of Luxenberg's basic thesis, purified of its radical hypothesis, may bear further fruit in the future publications that he has promised. With such revision, the present monograph warrants the enhanced attention that an English translation under the author's real name would provide for it.

Luxenberg's publication of *Die Syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* has revitalized a source critical study of the Qur'ān in ways which promise to move far beyond the limitations of nineteenth century textual criticism and twentieth century revisionist approaches. Luxenberg deserves our gratitude and appreciation for re-invigorating an important aspect of Qur'ānic studies and his future publications will be eagerly awaited and gladly received.

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Jaako Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqāma, a history of a genre*, Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz), 2002 (= *Diskurse der Arabistik*, 5), 502 S. ISBN 3-447-04591-4, 104 Euro

Die Makamenliteratur, Inbegriff meisterlicher arabischer Kunstprosa, beansprucht seit jeher besonderes Interesse. Aufgrund ihrer längeren Wirkungsgeschichte vom 10. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert bieten die in Reimprosa abgefaßten Texte mit eingestreuten Versen von mehr als zweihundert Autoren schon lange hinreichenden Stoff für eine monographische Bearbeitung dieses Genre. Gestützt auf eine Reihe eigener Vorarbeiten hat der finnische Orientalist Jaako Hämeen-Anttila nun erstmalig die Geschichte der Makamenliteratur monographisch zusammengestellt. Für seine Untersuchung hat er den umfangreichen Stoff auf insgesamt vierzehn Abschnitte verteilt. Die ersten vier Kapitel sind dem Begründer der Makamenliteratur, Badī' az-Zamān (»der Einzige der Zeit« *al-Hamadānī* (gest. 398/1008), und seinem Œuvre gewidmet. Inhaltlich noch breit gefächert, weisen seine Makamen bereits die wichtigsten Struktur- und Stilelemente (S. 39-61) auf. Vordatierungen des Genres um ein Jahrhundert aufgrund möglicher Einflüsse von Vorläufern, etwa Ibn Duraid's (gest. 321/933) *Wasf al-maṭar*, werden dabei vom Verfasser (S. 64-73) ebenso kundig besprochen wie Wirkungen eines von Shmuel Moreh behaupteten mittelalterlichen Theaters (S. 85f.) auf die Makamen abgelehnt werden. Auch griechisch-persische Einflüsse (S. 89) scheiden aus. Im Anschluß an eine eingehende Analyse dreier ausgewählter Makamen *al-Hamadānīs* (al-